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## CHRISTMAS MASKINGS IN BOSTON.

THE jealousy which the Puritans entertained of the celebration of Christmas Day, as connected with Popish usages, caused that day not only to lose its sacred character, but even to be entirely undistinguished. The writer has heard his father say that in the early years of the century, when he was a pupil in the Boston Latin School, at Christmas time the master inquired before the school what day that might be, and that none of the boys was able to return an answer. The change which has since taken place shows how sudden, in modern years, may be variations of usage. Nevertheless, in the eighteenth century the popular games and mummings which in England belonged to the season still continued to be more or less observed in New England, according to the following account :—

“When my mother was a girl (she was born about 1752, and died at the age of 95 years) maskers came to houses and entered with a prologue, each making a speech. The performance included a prologue, combat, cure, and questions. I remember the following lines :—

Here comes I who never came yet,  
Great head and little wit,  
And though my wit it is so ill,  
Before I go I 'll please you still.

“Next came questions and evasive answers :—

‘How wide is this river?’  
‘The ducks and the geese they do fly over.’

The asker was a traveller coming over. All were maskers in disguise, with swords, etc. At this time Christmas was not kept.”

The informant from whom this curious piece of information was obtained, Mr. John A. Fulton, of Cambridge, Mass., now deceased, belonged to a family identified with colonial Massachusetts, his grandmother having assisted his grandfather in throwing overboard the tea which was cast into Boston harbor.

Probably every other city in America had the same usage, and kept it up until a period much later than that indicated for Boston. It would be worth while to make some record of these survivals of the Saturnalia.

*W. W. Newell.*